

FRIENDLY PARK

Neighborhood Workshop # 1

October 14, 2004



MEETING REPORT

Workshop time: 6:30 to 8:30pm

Workshop location: Adams Elementary School Library, 950 W 22nd Ave.

Workshop facilitator: Philip Richardson

Other City staff present: Therese Picado

BACKGROUND

City of Eugene Parks Planning staff hosted the first of several neighborhood workshops to discuss upcoming improvements to Friendly Park. Improvements to the park are funded by the Parks and Open Space bond measure passed in 1998 by area residents. The workshop included a brief presentation on the project, the process, and the context of the park. This was followed by a general, informal discussion of issues and ideas relating to park improvements. Goals for the evening included sharing:

- relevant information about the park and its surrounds;
- ideas for park improvements; and
- priorities for spending.

About 17 neighbors and interested parties, including 2 City staff and five children attended the workshop.

ADVERTISEMENT

Advertisement for workshop #1 included the following:

- A postcard invitation was mailed on September 29th (14 days prior to the workshop) to 1814 Friendly Neighborhood area residents and businesses within approximately 1/2 mile of the park.
- An article on the event was included in the October 7 issue of the Council Newsletter
- A news release was distributed on September 30th
- The workshop was included on the City Manager's Office public meetings calendar
- The workshop was advertised on the City's website calendar of events, and on the Friendly Park web page: <http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/parks/friendly/index.htm>

PRESENTATION

Meeting participants convened at the Adams Elementary School library. A brief introduction was given to the Parks and Open Space Plan and the role of Parks Planning in the development of POS projects over the next few years. Several maps were displayed, showing the Friendly Neighborhood Parks and Open Spaces, an aerial photo of the site taken this past spring, and the concept plan for the park that was developed in 1995 by neighbors and a UO Landscape Architecture student.

The planning process was outlined briefly and it was explained that there will be more opportunities for public comment in the future. The schedule was given for park construction in the summer of 2006, with some possibility of earlier construction depending on how the neighborhood process flowed and what improvements were finally decided on. The existing park site was reviewed in detail, including a description of major elements such as street frontage, the alley, and circulation, trees, drainage, furnishings, and the play areas.

Play equipment safety issues identified by a certified playground safety instructor were discussed including the need to replace the current swing set due to shallow concrete footings, and entanglement protrusions on the top bar. Both the metal slide and the whirl were also determined to have some compliance issues but were less a priority than the swing.

Staff also presented ADA (the Americans with Disabilities Act) access issues, explaining that whenever playground improvements were made, that the City was legally required to provide access. In the case of Friendly Park this would include the need for a hard surface pathway up to the play equipment. It was also explained that the City currently prefers to use engineered wood fibers as a playground surfacing to comply with ADA, although in some situations both sand and wood fibers are used.

Status of existing trees which were reviewed with the Urban Forestry staff, was given. Most trees on site were deemed healthy, although many had need of some pruning and dead wood removal. The pines in the southwest corner may need to be removed due to pitch moth infestation, and the Hornbeam and the Kentucky Coffeetree along Monroe need to be examined more closely for rot and health concerns.

DISCUSSION

With the group of about 12 adults, a productive discussion was held around issues and ideas for the park. All participants had an opportunity to speak, and did share issues, concerns, ideas, and preferences for improvements to the park. A list is provided following this summary for a more detailed report of participant comments.

The general concept of a neighborhood park was discussed, in contrast to a community park and a metropolitan park, and that a neighborhood park was intended to serve all residents within a ½ mile safe walking distance. The participant group agreed that the park design should retain the small neighborhood feel, and build upon and improve the existing uses without over-developing the site. Expressly desired uses for the park included children's play, gathering spot and place to socialize, places to sit, place to get out of the rain, dog walking - if on leash and waste is picked up, picnicking, walking and jogging, nature enjoyment, relaxation, and informal active recreation such as pickup ball games, Frisbee etc.

Participants provided good feedback about the **children's playground**. The existing play features were discussed, and all agreed that swings were the top priority, and higher swings with multiple bays were preferred. The slide and whirl had both supporters and detractors, some feeling that they were unsafe and should be replaced, others feeling that they were both very valuable, not only for play value, but for the historical connection they made. It was suggested that at the next workshop, staff bring catalogues of newer play equipment for participants to peruse. Sand as a play element was strongly favored, as well as having access to water that could be used with sand.

Most agreed that the park should have **a central gathering place**, with nicer places to sit and a hard surface path to allow better access, and that features should be usable to a wide variety of ages and abilities and have multiple purposes wherever possible. Art should also be integrated into features. Neighbors felt that volunteer projects to help implement plan features would be strongly supported. Several participants supported having a small shelter, to allow more use in inclement weather.

Some **negative use patterns** were mentioned, but adjacent neighbors said that most of those problems (homeless and car camping) had significantly lessened in recent years. It was explained that the neighborhood can be an important, positive influence in the park by using it, activating it with their presence, as well as supporting facilities and programming activities that encourage positive uses. CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) was also mentioned as a method of influencing how a park is used, and how safe it feels. Tod Schneider (CEPDTXS@ci.eugene.or.us) was mentioned as a good contact for more information about this subject. Most people felt that lighting would be inappropriate, and staff explained that it probably wouldn't be affordable within the existing budget.

The potential for increasing **native plants and wildlife habitat** was discussed. The idea of adding a drainage swale was supported although it would depend on existing drainage patterns and subsurface infrastructure. Staff mentioned that local trends have been leaning towards a blend of parklands and natural areas, particularly with restoration efforts for stream corridors and other native habitats. Participants appeared to support this idea as long as adequate field space was maintained for informal play activities. Participants were sensitive to the need to screen park activity from the adjacent neighbors and vice-versa, especially along Monroe street where new development is expected. Planting larger street trees along Monroe was suggested.

Participants understood and supported the **need to provide accessibility**. There was support for providing some kind of hard surface path or circuit connecting elements, allowing not only access for wheelchairs but also for strollers, people with limited mobility, children riding bikes and tricycles, and seniors to walk. The need for features that would be attractive and useful to adults and seniors was discussed including the possibility of adding a stretching station and a small patch or path of cobble mosaic that could be walked on to stimulate reflexology points.

A variety of ideas and insights were shared for how best to carry out the park design. Among these ideas, participants mentioned making use of volunteer, donations, and neighborhood matching grants to stretch the budget, as well as looking into the possibility of holding fundraisers.

The following is a general list of comments and ideas presented by participants during the workshop and either written down or recalled by staff.

Issues

Access/ Circulation

- **Alley** in past has been place for homeless campers, but in recent years is overgrown with blackberry to the point it is no longer used as such.
- No **safe route or circuit** for children to ride bikes, tricycles, skateboards around
- No **safe wheelchair access** to play equipment or benches
- **Poison oak** has been found in the southwest corner

Facilities/Design

- Minimize **hiding places**, such as the alley, and possibly the large boxwood hedge along the south edge.
- Opportunities for **field play** are limited as the site is broken up by trees and play equipment
- Park is missing a **gathering place**
- Park slopes towards the northwest corner, **drainage** is still an issue in the north end of the park.
- Most trees and shrubs on site are not **native**.

Use Patterns

- Concern about **homeless use and safety of kids**, although many attendees felt that the situation had notably improved over the past few years.
- **Good existing use by children**, both as individuals and groups.
- All the **play equipment** is heavily used and appreciated.
- **Swing footings** have been noticed as unsafe by others.
- **The whirl** is seen as unsafe by some, but desired by others.
- **Existing slide** has a lot of value both as play element and connection to history of park. Even a parent whose child had fallen off wanted to keep it.
- **Off-leash dogs** and **scoop law not being obeyed**.

Lighting

- Probably can't afford, most people spoke against it for wildlife and light pollution reasons.

Ideas

Access/ Circulation

- Add a **circuit or loop** that can be used by kids to practice bike riding\
- Have a **multiple function concrete path**, such as part of the gathering space, path, stone mosaic, artwork etc.
- **Alley** could be cleaned up for better access.
- **Open up the field** by moving the swing closer to the other play equipment
- Encourage adjacent neighbors to have **see-through fences**, or cover or disguise solid fences with plant materials

Facilities/Design

- The **little play structure** is great
- The **Slide** is dangerous, most children have flipped off of it at some point, but they still really like it.
- Slide makes a **historical connection** and we want to keep it.
- Slide doesn't meet many current **safety regulations**.
- **Lose the merry-go-round**, it isn't safe, has no safety surfacing, and is not appropriate for the little ones.
- The **whirl is great** because so many kids can use it at once, and generally the older kids do look out for the younger ones.
- It is nice to have some play equipment that works for the **little kids**, and some for the **big kids (including adults!)**
- Have something for **older kids** too.
- My 4 yr old likes the merry-go-round and the slide.
- Make the **play area bright and inviting** w/o sanitizing it because of safety constraints.
- We LOVE the swings! Keep the same amount of **swings**.
- If swings need to be replaced, replace them with equally **high swings**.
- Add elements that can be used by **skateboarders**, if not actual modular ramps, then something that can serve multiple purposes (like a low concrete wall edge with coping)
- **Safety surfacing** under swings is not sufficient.
- We really want to **keep the sand**, kids love to play in the sand
- Please don't remove the sand,
- Add a **super-scoop** (for sand digging play)
- Have a **Spica** or two (a small whirl-like play item)
- Add a **drinking fountain** and a way for kids to access water to use with the sand.
- Can we have both ADA and non-ADA play areas?
- We want a **sand box!**
- If we get rid of sand swings and whirls the park will be worse. **Don't spend money to make the park worse**. Is there an option not to spend the money if the park will be worse?
- Move the swing set closer to the sidewalk to open up more space for field play.
- Keep or improve the open space zone – the open field.
- Let's have **small shelter** to get out of the rain.
- **Bike rack**
- Provide **functional art** such as playground elements, benches, etc.
- Maybe the old play equipment could be reused/recycled into an art piece.
- Be careful that the park doesn't get **over-crowded**, it's a small site.
- **River stone mosaic** that will stimulate pressure points on the feet. These are common in Chinese parks, and have proven health benefit, especially for seniors.
- May be an opportunity to use a swale for drainage. Kevin Higgins volunteered to help install a swale.

Plantings

- **Remove invasive plant species**
- **Flower beds** would be inviting.
- **Camas bulbs and wetland plants** are available from neighbors yards. We should replant some in the park.
- Park borders should allow **clear visibility** into the park to reduce safety issues and

- inappropriate uses of the site.
- **Planting strip** has lost several trees. The species selected along Monroe are too small and won't screen any eventual housing developments.
- Perhaps plantings could be added to **increase wildlife habitat**

Use Patterns

- Please have **signs and doggie bags** for dog owners reminding them of the leash and scoop laws.
- **Dog walkers** can be aggressive and not approachable. Some are very noisy when calling their dogs.
- Matt Cooper has volunteered to help fill a **dog waste bag dispenser**
- Be aware of potential places for **homeless camping**, start a neighborhood watch program.
- Possible instances of **prostitution** happening along 27th
- Park should be **multi-generational** - provide something for all ages
- Keep **views open** from the street into the park

General

- Maybe have some kind of **fundraisers**.
- Advertise in FAN newsletter for **donations, artists, volunteers**.
- Increase **volunteer** opportunities.

FINDINGS

Neighbors clearly enjoy the park as it exists and don't want changes to ruin the feel or reduce the play value. Better consolidation of the play equipment, with some updating and possibly addition of equipment is strongly supported, as is increasing access for all, integrating as many multiple function elements as possible, and creating a gathering spot for social interaction. Keeping some sand play is important, as is the addition of a drinking fountain and access to water for sand play. Integral art should be pursued, possibly as a volunteer project. Some better buffering of Monroe is desired, along with plantings for habitat restoration and the installation of a swale if possible. The addition of better signage is also desired.

CLOSING

Participants were reminded that there will be at least one more public meeting for Friendly Park, probably early in 2005, and they were encouraged to watch the City/Region section of the newspaper as well as their mailbox for invitations to this event. It was explained that, at the next workshop, participants will be able to respond to several park design concepts that will be developed based upon discussions and priorities from today's event. Participants or other interested parties are welcome to discuss the project or submit comments at any time via phone, email or delivered mail.

ATTENDEES:

The following parties were at the first workshop and signed in on the attendance sheet:

Steve Daniels

Nancy Ellen Locke

Anita Boutette

Michael Boutette
Lois Rosner
Pat Greene
David Strom

Kevin Higgins
Tamara Campbell
Katja Heide

and a handful of small
children...

COMMENT SHEETS

The following comments were recorded on comment sheets provided at the workshop and turned in to City staff at the end of the event. Also included here will be comments phoned or emailed in to staff.

Total comment sheets handed in at meeting: 6

Total comment sheets handed in, emailed, or phoned in following the meeting: 5

1. *In what ways do you think Oakmont Park can benefit you, your neighborhood, or your community?*
 - **We go visit with neighbors 2 times a week at least (in good weather ☺)**
 - **A place to play**
 - **Trees Green space**
 - **I'd spend more time there with my grandson and feel like I could get to know more neighbors**
 - **Less car use for me – going to a park closer to home**
 - **A community forum – coming together place**
 - **Gathering place for the neighborhood**
 - **A place for adult use too.**
 - **Stretching equipment for adults to use while they are watching children and for adults**
 - **Stone stepping site**
 - **The park benefits me by providing a respite from the daily grind, as well as a place for my dog to romp. It can do the same for anybody in my neighborhood or the larger community.**
 - **It can also be a meeting place or a venue for small local events.**
 - **A close place to let the kids run around, play and interact with other neighborhood children**
2. *What do you feel are some of the most important issues facing the park?*
 - **Dogs – owner lack of control and respect for kids/people in the park**
 - **Safe play equipment**
 - **ADA improvements**
 - **Children unable to use park without parental supervision because of encounters with homeless campers.**
 - **Making it more appealing and safe for younger children**
 - **Making it more friendly and accessible to neighbors**
 - **Safety, safety, safety...**
 - **Breaking through the level of “doubt” the neighbors have – why do the neighbors have bad feelings?**
 - **I'm not aware of any burning issues, aside from the current improvement plans. I'm**

most concerned, in fact, that, in a well-meaning attempt to improve the park, the city will introduce elements that detract from the park's simple charm. I'm most interested in using park dollars where they are needed, and I'm not aware of significant shortcomings in Friendly Park. That said, I'd support baggies for dog owners to scoop poop. I take care of my dogs, but I'm sure some dog owners are less considerate.

- Safety, accessibility, usage

3. *What existing features or aspects of the park site do you like most, or feel should be preserved?*

- Keep the small play structure & merry-go-round. If the big slide didn't flip small children we'd love it. I'd rather keep it than get one that is safe but no fun.
- We've got to have some sand.
- Trees.
- Small play structure.
- Open space
- Trees!.
- Benches clustered for older folks to sit while watching their younger children.
- Lovely trees – lots of sand.
- Open, simple.
- Trees – open space.
- Toys for kids but equal use stuff for adults too.
- Keep an openness.
- I like Friendly Park for its simplicity or absence of features, in fact. I would preserve it as is, but with a doggie-bag system, perhaps. I don't think it needs anything else, although I'm open to possibilities.
- I like the swings and the structure (also the big trees!)

4. *What do you think needs to be improved or changed most?*

- Get rid of dog poop. In France they have little sand boxes with short fences for dogs to use.
- Remove the unsafe slide and merry-go-round.
- Install engineered wood fiber and ADA sidewalk.
- Install new slide and Kompan Spica.
- Add an overhang of sorts to provide a rainy-day access.
- Drinking fountain, bathrooms?
- Berming to provide a hill on open space.
- Some cement walk/ride place so kids can bike.
- Maybe benches along the cement for folks to sit and visit.
- Make a place for adults to use this park too – parks aren't just for children.
- Safety and ADA issues met.
- Social area to meet at or under.
- Make it a brighter more inviting place to be.
- Nothing.
- Safer slide, better drainage, more benches or tables, stroller/bike or wheelchair access

5. *What are some of the activities and/or facilities you would like to see happen in the park? (Please refer to the attached general list of activities and facilities, but feel free to add items that are not on the list)*
- **Use by neighbors and neighborhood children.**
 - **BBQ pit by the tables.**
 - **Yoga classes.**
 - **Neighborhood meetings/neighbors getting to know each other**
 - **Free music events from a wide range of genres. Can't think of any necessary facilities.**
 - **I love having a small structure appropriate for all ages (even the little guys) I would like to see more tables for gatherings or events.**
6. *What other considerations are important for the success of this park?*
- **We like the openness of the park, no enclosure planting like at Monroe.**
 - **Park Rules Sign.**
 - **More lights. Light up at night if that would make it safer.**
 - **My husband and I have been talking about the wonderful ideas that were brought up on how to make the park work for an inter-generational crowd. We are excited to have our park include seniors.**
 - **As with any public project, the most important consideration is thoroughly evaluating the opinions of all users and arriving at some sort of consensus. No small challenge, to be sure.**
7. *Any other comments?*
- **Safe play equipment**
 - **Signs to keep dogs out.**
 - **Signs hours of park**
 - **Keep sand.**
 - **Site is relatively cold compared to surroundings. Cold air tends to flow down off College hill and collect in the area**
 - **Please keep me posted, and weigh potential "improvements" against other uses -- possibly better uses -- of available funds.**
 - **Thanks, I look forward to the improvements!**